

My name is Roberta Jacobs, and I am the Food Service Director for Norwich Public Schools, which is in Senator Edith Prague's district. I am also the President-Elect for the School Nutrition Association of CT. We met with Senator Prague on January 19th to discuss funding for the school nutrition programs. This bill - Raised Bill No. 932, AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF SEVERE NEED SCHOOL FOR PURPOSES OF THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST GRANT PROGRAM – is part of what came out of our discussion.

I am here to talk with you today about hungry children. One of the most important things we can do for our children is to make sure they have a healthy breakfast. Many children in CT do not. In Norwich, we have a great breakfast program, with about half of the students eating breakfast with us each morning. The extra funding we receive from the state because of our severe need (Norwich is about 70% Free and Reduced) enables us to have this program. We work with the school staff to make sure every child that needs a meal gets one.

But there are other towns in this state that do not meet the 40% severe need limit, do not have breakfast programs, but still have hungry children. An average elementary school has 300 students, and if 20% of them are free and reduced, that is 60 students who are hungry. There may not be food in the house to feed them, so they are trying to study on an empty stomach. The school district may not feel the need for a breakfast program, partly because of the extra expense it may cause, and so these children go hungry. With this funding to help, the districts may be able to start breakfast programs and feed these hungry students.

Some people wonder why we are even talking about serving breakfast, because that is something that a parent should be doing. With the economy in the state it is, many homes have trouble finding money just to pay the bills, and putting food on the table gets harder and harder. The meals we serve at school help the families to stretch their already strained budgets. One of the things we always try to make sure of is that the children don't suffer because of the problems going on in the homes.

I realize that with the economy in the state that it is, there isn't much money to go around, but we do need to take care of our children. Another plus is that School Nutrition Programs do create jobs for the state economy.

I ask your support for Raised Bill No. 932, and for feeding our children a nutritious breakfast.

Thank you.